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TAGS: [NATO](#) [PREL](#) [RU](#)
SUBJECT: NATO-RUSSIA: ALLIES STILL GRAPPLING WITH MEANING
OF PUTIN SPEECH AT MUNICH

Classified By: Ambassador Victoria Nuland for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

¶1. (S/NF) Allied PermReps and the Russian Ambassador sought to clear the air from the Munich Conference in the Feb. 28 NATO-Russia Council (NRC). The Russian delegation has stated repeatedly that Putin's speech in Munich gives us a road-map for future frank discussions at the NRC. Poland, UK, and Canada disputed Putin's assessment of U.S. unilateralism, while Hungary and Greece seemed to agree that Putin's speech has re-energized the NRC. Ambassador Nuland warned that Putin's speech created false enemies; we have moved well beyond this in the NRC. Allies advanced most of the ideas from the joint German/U.S. food-for-thought paper on potential areas of cooperation as the way forward in the NRC. End summary.

¶2. (S/NF) Under the heading "the strategic context of NATO-Russia relations today," Allied PermReps and the Russian Ambassador discussed Putin's speech from the February Munich Security Conference in the February 28 NATO-Russia Council. In a prior February 27 Away Day discussion of Russia among the 26 Allies, the majority of PermReps expressed a reasonable understanding of the political dynamics ongoing in Moscow. However, roughly a third of them still hold to the "let's not rock the boat" approach to Russia. Ambassador Nuland pointed out to Allies that it is not desirable to let the United States always play the role of goalie and that other PermReps have to stand up to Russian bullying when it is merited. We should cooperate with the Russia in the NRC when we can, but not shy away from a frank discussion where we must.

Tongue-in-Cheek Lost in Translation

¶3. (S/NF) During the NRC meeting, the UK, Polish, and Canadian PermReps forcefully rebuked the Russian Federation for singling out the United States in President Putin's Munich speech. The UK objected to Putin's assessment saying we are not moving to a unipolar world; quite the contrary, he said, the world is becoming more and more multipolar. He cited China and India as examples. Poland encouraged Russia to move beyond the outdated zero-sum view and to seek a win/win approach to common problems and projects.

¶4. (S/NF) Offering tongue-in-cheek praise, the German PermRep said the NRC political dialogue lacked openness and Putin's speech removed taboos. He encouraged an open dialogue in the NRC with no taboo subjects, and then, proceeded to seek NRC discussions on a number of areas sensitive to the Russians.

Specifically, Germany wanted to know the basis for Putin's assessment that the current strategic balance was impaired. Furthermore, he asked what more Allies could do to be transparent on enlargement and what concrete Russian interests does enlargement violate. He said Allies are addressing Russian concerns about U.S. plans to deploy missile defense in Europe, even though the system is directed at Iranian missile threat; likewise, Russia must realize that the Russian arms sales to Iran and training of Iranian nuclear scientists in Russia increases Allies' anxiety. Finally, Germany as well as France sought more transparency on the new Russian military doctrine that allegedly identifies NATO as a threat.

15. (S/NF) The Hungarian PermRep thanked President Putin for giving the NRC a dose of motivation to open up more substantial dialogue in the NRC. The Greek PermRep and Russian Ambassador picked up on the Hungarian comments and also praised Putin's speech as constructive. Privately, the Hungarian delegation subsequently clarified that their Ambassador's praise of Putin's speech was meant as a joke, but, unfortunately, his stone-faced presentation had not given this impression.

WIN/WIN OR ZERO-SUM GAME?

16. (S/NF) Russian Ambassador Totskiy said he was glad Putin's speech had energized the NRC. He claimed "expansion of NATO was not a priority question for Russia," but clarified that President Putin told the SYG in their October 2006 meeting that Russia could not understand why NATO would put pressure on partners to join the Alliance (i.e., Ukraine). This would not lead to stability. On CFE, Totskiy is still worried

about U.S. deployments in Bulgaria and Romania, and said the Alliance is constantly creating new demands regarding the Istanbul Commitments. He said there will be bloodshed in Transnistria if Russian peacekeepers are removed without an alternative. Ambassador Totskiy stated the Russians are considering different ideas on their military doctrine, including logistics reforms and structures in their military academies, but the process will require 2-3 more years to develop. The new military doctrine would be built on a new concept of national security. Out of the blue, Totskiy condemned the recent Chinese test to destroy a satellite in space.

17. (S/NF) Ambassador Nuland took issue with Hungary's and Russia's characterization of the Munich speech as "re-energizing," noting its zero-sum philosophy was contrary to the win/win spirit we all worked so hard to achieve in the NRC. The United States is ready to move forward with practical cooperation and frank political discussion in the NRC, and it is up to Russia to make a strategic choice on the NRC's future. The NRC has done a good job of addressing the common threats from terrorism, proliferation, and WMD, but more must be done on cooperation on Afghanistan, missile defense, and peacekeeping. To enhance peacekeeping inter-operability, SOFA ratification is a prerequisite; this would also reaffirm Russian commitment to the NRC. The Ambassador said Russia is the only country at this table still building missiles, and she encouraged them to consider missile defense instead. She stated the Allies are prepared to ratify the adapted CFE the moment Russia withdraws its troops from countries that do not want them there. Lastly, she underscored the minimal U.S. presence associated with our basing agreements with Romania and Bulgaria.

18. (S/NF) In a lively discussion, Allies seized most of the ideas from the joint German/U.S. food-for-thought paper on deliverables for the NRC anniversaries. Many Allies encouraged Russia to be more open to frank discussions in the NRC on topics such as energy security or the separatist conflicts, and encouraged deeper practical cooperation on counter-narcotics, Theater Missile Defense, support to ISAF, and equipment to the ANA. Canada also proposed cooperation

in the Arctic on areas such as oil-spill response and search and rescue.

COMMENT

[19](#). (S/NF) The NRC discussion on Putin's speech was a lively and mostly useful debate -- Germany and France found courage; UK, Canada, and Poland found heart; but Hungary opened up an unfortunate line on Putin's speech. Moreover, Spain and Greece still are afraid to step up to the plate in the NRC.
End comment.

NULAND